



— State of —  
**North Dakota**  
*Office of the Governor*  
**John Hoeven**  
*Governor*

Testimony of John Hoeven  
Governor of North Dakota  
BRAC Commission Hearing  
Grand Forks, North Dakota  
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I am John Hoeven, Governor of North Dakota. Grand Forks Air Force Base and the airmen assigned are not just tenants to the citizens and elected officials of North Dakota. We are partners and at every corner work together to support both national and local defense issues.

One example of our support is the Veteran's Bonus legislation passed this year, which appropriated \$5,000,000 of state funds to provide every active duty, National Guard, and reserve North Dakota resident veteran with \$100 for every month of deployment in the Theater of Military Operations.

I would also note that many of our airmen assigned to Grand Forks ultimately retire in North Dakota. A primary reason is our strong community support of the military.

One of the issues we are currently working on is the creation of a Joint National Training Center in North Dakota. This air and land space initiative has been extensively briefed and has the strong support not only of North Dakota, but also at the highest levels of the Air Force. These individuals recognize the clear advantages to using our diverse terrain, infrastructure, and climate to train real world scenarios.

This concept would transform the entire state, some 70,000 square miles, into the largest air and special forces training area in the entire world. North Dakota is an ideal setting for this training area due to diversity of the terrain, four distinct weather seasons, bases in the state that are well suited for exercises and virtually no air traffic congestion.

This initiative represents a three year concerted effort that, in addition to multiple briefings of senior General Officers, includes working with the affected civilian airlines to address issues in advance. These issues have already been addressed and we have agreements in place with the airlines.

I have provided you with a copy of our presentation, which I strongly urge you to watch. It truly demonstrates the military value of North Dakota. While in other regions access to airspace is diminishing, the Joint National Training Center initiative puts Grand Forks Air Force Base on an upward trend.

Of all northern tier bases, Grand Forks offers the greatest potential for cooperation between active duty and National Guard forces. As stated in the background paper on realignment of Grand Forks Air Force Base dated June 3<sup>rd</sup>, the designation of the Predator and Global Hawk mission to GFAFB as a joint Air Force-National Guard initiative allows “the opportunity to take advantage of Future Total Force integration initiatives to capture highly skilled Airmen for emerging mission requirements.” As Commander in Chief of the North Dakota National Guard, I am pleased to welcome joint operations between the National Guard and the Air Force.

Grand Forks Air Force Base also offers the military access to the premier aerospace facility in the country in the John D. Odegard School of Aerospace Sciences at the University of North Dakota. UND has already partnered with the Army to train West Point helicopter pilots and with NASA to operate the DC-8 research jet also known as “The Flying Lab.” The Aerospace school would be an outstanding partner with the Air Force in creating a UAV Center of Excellence in Grand Forks.

Finally, Grand Forks is absolutely the right location for the UAV mission to support homeland security. The Grand Forks Border Patrol Station has responsibility for 900 miles of border – from the Great Lakes through most of Montana – the largest border section of the Northern tier.

We believe the Department of Defense recommendation to retain Grand Forks Air Force Base was a correct decision based on military value, but we also believe the military value analysis was flawed. It doesn’t give proper weight to significant sections of the eight specified BRAC criteria, as we’ve identified.

To eliminate all the tankers as recommended would create a vacuum in the entire North central part of the country. I would note that one of Canada’s fears is a terrorist attack on the US coming through Canada. In addition, keeping a flying mission at Grand Forks would only serve to enhance the UAV mission. And our Air Guard can provide the support for cooperation and crew augmentation with the Air Force for the tanker mission.

North Dakota presents unique opportunities for military value not available anywhere else in the United States. Grand Forks Air Force Base is vital to capturing that value – making it vital for our military.